

A LESSON AND A FORTUNE FOR CHRISTIAN MEN OF BUSINESS NO. 1880

A SERMON
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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,
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*“Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as you have: for He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you.”
Hebrews 13:5.*

THE apostle warns us against a tendency very natural to our race. “Let your conversation be without covetousness.” I am afraid that the precept is even more needed now than in the days of the apostle. We are still more sharp and keen in competition, and men in trade are even more anxious to accumulate money than they were in apostolic times. It is not easy for a man to keep his heart clear of covetousness, or his hands clean from moral bribes. There is a singular stickiness about gold and silver. They have a great tendency to birdlime our souls, and hold them fast, so that they cannot rise superior to their influence. The Revised Version reads our text, “Be you free from the love of money,” and it puts in the margin, “Let your turn of mind be free from the love of money.” May we all enjoy that freedom, and may our turn of mind lead us to seek better things than the miser is able to hoard!

There is a laudable pursuit of gain, without which business would not be properly carried on, but there is a line, scarcely as broad as a razor's edge, between diligence in business and greediness for gain. We can so easily pass from the one into the other, that we may hardly be aware of it ourselves. When a man is increasing his investments, when he is extending his agencies, when he is enlarging his warehouse, when he is employing a larger number of persons than formerly, or even when he is bemoaning the depression of his trade, and his heart is aching because he has to do only half as much business as before, covetousness may insinuate itself into his conversation. It is a snake which can enter at the smallest hole. It lurks in the grass where it is long, but it glides also where the pasture is bare. It may come in, either in prosperity or in adversity, and it is needful to whisper in the ear of each believer, whether going up or down in the world, “Let your conversation—your daily conduct—be without covetousness.” Any brother here—and it is to the brethren mainly that the temptation comes, I think—any brother here may have present need of such a warning as this, and if he does not need it just now, he may lay it by till he does, for it will keep. Yet let me not restrict the text or the sermon to the male side of the house, the sisters may fall into a like temptation, in the saving, as their husbands in the getting. You godly matrons, you industrious Marthas, “Let your conversation be without covetousness.”

The apostle here hints at what is the real cure for covetousness, namely, contentment. This is a rare drug in the market. The words of the apostle make up a golden sentence—“Be content with such things as you have.”

It is supposed by most persons that they could be content if they were not exactly what they are, and where they are, but the precept exhorts them to be content with their present circumstances. If they had a little more they would be satisfied, but that is not the contentment to which we are exhorted. It is written, “Be content with such things as you have.” If God has multiplied your possessions, you ought the more readily to be content with such things as you have, though I am not sure you will be, for there is a saltiness in the water which comes out of wells dug by the Philistines, so that he who drinks from them shall thirst again. I once thought that a million would satisfy any mortal man, but I have been assured by one who has considerable experience in that direction that he who has one million is unable to see any reason why he should not have two or ten. However, I may let that pass, for millions or thousands are not

likely to tempt the most of us who are here assembled, if you have little possessions, yet still hear the voice of wisdom, which says, "Be content with such things as you have." You now have a measure of trouble by reason of the limited capacity of your means; you might have more trouble with the breadth of your means, if you had all you would like to have. It may not be quite easy to travel when your garments are too short, but it is much harder to keep them from dragging in the mire when they are very long. Though a single staff is such a convenience that a traveler without one may sigh for it, yet a dozen staffs would be a load, which would make the burdened man prefer rather to have no staff at all than to have so many to carry. I believe that it is an advantage to have wealth when wealth is kept in its right place, but the difficulty is that the horse often runs away with the rider, and he who has wealth too often loses his liberty, and falls into sore bondage, by becoming the slave of his own possessions. "Be content with such things as you have." After all, contentment drinks the cream of life. So far as earthly things are concerned, he is the happiest, no; he is the richest man, who is content with such things as he has. The ripest apple in the garden grows on the tree of contentment. The garments which fit us best are the most fit for us, and are the most comfortable wear. He who is where he should be, and where he would be, has no cause to envy Solomon in all his glory. He that lives in the Valley of Humiliation, among the fragrant flowers and the sweet-voiced birds, and looks up to heaven for his treasure, and to God for his home, he is the happiest of mortal men. God teach us how to shun the vice of covetousness by cultivating the virtue of contentment! May the sweet flower choke the ill weed! "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as you have."

I asked a question, some years ago, of a person whom I believed to be one of the most covetous individuals in my acquaintance, and I received from him a singular reply. I said, "How was it that St. Francis de Sales, who was an eminent confessor, to whom persons went in the Romish church to confess their sins, found that persons confessed to him, in private, all sorts of horrible sins, such as adultery, drunkenness, and murder, but never had one person confessed the sin of covetousness?" I asked this friend whether he could tell me why it was, and he gave me this answer, which certainly did take me rather aback. He said, "I suppose it is because the sin is so extremely rare." Blind soul! I told him that, on the other hand, I feared the sin was so very common that people did not know when they were covetous, and that the man who was most covetous of all was the last person to suspect himself of it. I feel persuaded that it is so. Covetousness breeds insensibility in the heart, a mortification in the conscience, a blindness in the mind. It is as hard to convict a man of it as to make a deaf ear hear of its own deficiencies. You cannot make a horseleech see the impropriety of desiring to suck; to all your expostulations it renders the one answer, "Give, give." Covetousness goes about in disguise. In the "Holy War" we read that, when Diabolus sent traitors to lurk about the town of Mansoul, he sent among the rest a young fellow named Covetousness, but when he entered into the town of Mansoul, he took the name of Mr. Prudent Thrifty, and he was engaged at once as a servant, I think it was in the house of Mr. Conscience, the Recorder. He seemed such a likely young man, this youth of the name of Prudent Thrifty. Now, mind you, friends, when you are taking a servant, that you do not engage one with the name of Prudent Thrifty, for I have information that he comes of the family of the Greedies, and that his true name is, "Covetousness," though it may be long before you find it out. His near relations are the Screws, the Skinflints, and the Grab-alls, but he will not own them, but always mentions his great-uncle, Squire Prudence, and his mother's brother, Professor Economy, of the University of Accumulation. You will have need to carry your eyes in your head if you mean to practice the precept, "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as you have."

I am exceedingly glad that the Apostle Paul had met with certain covetous Hebrews. This epistle was written by a Hebrew of the Hebrews, to the Hebrews, and Hebrews, from Jacob downwards, were never quite free from this sin. They are not so today. I am glad he met with some of them, because, in giving an exhortation to them, he let drop one of the choicest pearls in all the treasury of God's Word, a pearl which Gentiles will prize as much as their brethren the Jews. Here it is—"For He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you." This is the reason why we must not be covetous. There is no room to be covetous, no excuse for being covetous, for God has said, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." We ought to be content. If we are not content, we are acting insanely, seeing the Lord has said, "I will never

leave you, nor forsake you.” If we have God’s presence, God’s help, God’s covenant favor, God’s gracious providence; God’s covenant engagements for our good, what can we want more?

I. The first observation I am going to make upon this most weighty text is this, THAT A WORD OF THE LORD IS OF GREAT WEIGHT TO A BELIEVER. Paul said, “Let your conversation be without covetousness,” and there was weight in that. He added, “Be content with such things as you have,” and there was weight in that also, for there was inspiration at the back of each sentence. But when he went on to say, “FOR HE HAS SAID,” and to bring in the personality of God as distinctly speaking to each one of us, saying, “I will never leave you, nor forsake you,” then he felt that he had brought the weightiest argument that he himself, as an inspired man, could think of. When Jehovah Himself speaks, there is no excuse for doubting, questioning, or answering again. When God Himself deals with our souls, we are like wax under the seal, at least, we desire to be so.

I want you, my hearer, to discern whose child you are by this. I observe, growing up everywhere, a trifling with the Word of God, a questioning of this, and a questioning of that. I am not half so much concerned about the false doctrine that is being taught, when the teacher of it thinks he gets it from the Bible, as I am when I find men treating the Bible as though it were just nothing at all, or, at least, an exceedingly small matter. If the Scripture stands in their way, our modern divines drive a tunnel through it, as readily as men make a railroad through a hill. They toss the sacred Book on one side, as if it were quite a common document which might be treated with indifference, since the age has outgrown its Bible. Now, mark this; by this shall you know whether you are a child of God, or not; by the respect that you have to your Father’s Word. If you have small respect for that Word, the evidences of a bastard are upon you.

If you tremble at God’s Word, if you stand in awe of it, if you can read the one hundred and nineteenth Psalm through, and can join with David in intense delight in the Law of God, you have the traits of a true-born child of God, and the Book is yours, with all that it contains, but if not, you are one of the children of that evil one who questioned the Word of the Lord in the beginning, and continues to deny it to this day. If you pick and choose in the teachings of inspiration, if you believe this, and slight that, you make yourself a judge of that which is your Judge, and you have not the tokens of a child of God. See well to this, for there is more in this test than quibblers will allow. That which they lightly esteem is precious in the sight of the Lord. If you are a child of God, you may find it needful to protest against what I say on my own authority, for what am I but a poor creature like yourself? If you are a child of God, you may have to stand out against even that which is a settled doctrine among renowned divines, for we know no human authority in the church of God, *but if you are a child of God, a single text will be enough for you.* I set a solitary passage of God’s Word against a Sanhedrim of philosophers. They may argue and dogmatize as they will, but one Word from the mouth of the Lord has more weight than all their counsels. If God’s light and God’s Word are not in them, we need not pay regard to them. Even the babe in grace shall triumph, by the aid of God’s Word, over the most learned and mighty of those who despise the Book. The day is coming when all this “modern thought” will pass away like the leaves in autumn. How soon shall the white frost of scientific infidelity pass from off the face of the Lord’s green pastures! O Jerusalem, those who invade you shall be as the foam upon the waters! Where is the scribe? Where are the counters of the towers? God has made nothing of the great ones, and made foolishness of the wisdom of this world. By this shall you know the children of God—one Word of God has weight and authority with them, but the seed of the serpent still say, “Yes, has God said?”

See then the argument, “Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as you have: for *He has said.*” That “*He has said*” is the hammer which drives the nail home, and clinches it, with every true child of God.

II. My second observation is this; THE WORD OF THE LORD MAY HAVE A THOUSAND FULFILMENTS.

When man makes a promise, and he keeps it, that promise is done with. You cannot expect a banker to pay a check a second time. The merchant who duly meets his bill once has met it once and for all, and the document is from that time of no value. But when God makes a promise He fulfils it, fulfils it, and fulfils it, again, and again, and again, to the same man, and to hundreds of other men. The Lord’s prom-

ise once given is never recalled. He does as good as give forth each inspired promise every moment anew; He is forever promising that which is once promised in His Word. He has made a promise for all time when He has once made it. So long as there shall be need of such a promise, God will never speak in secret, in a dark place of the earth, and revoke what He has said—

*“Engraved as in eternal brass
The mighty promise shines;
Nor can the powers of darkness erase
Those everlasting lines”*

Now, I do not think this particular promise is recorded anywhere in the Old Testament in these exact words. There are great differences between the Hebrew and the Septuagint, and this particular Greek text, “He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you,” is not to be found with exact accuracy in either. I suspect that this is, in fact, a household word of the Lord our God, which, though you find the like of it in Scripture, needs not to have been expressly recorded there, because essentially, and from the very nature of things, it must be true of Jehovah our God. He, who is the God of grace and of immutable love, has virtually said, by His very nature, to those that seek His face, “I will never leave you, nor forsake you.” All that we know about God says, “I will never leave you, nor forsake you.” All that we have ever experienced about God, all that our fathers have experienced, goes to show that Jehovah does not forsake His people, nor cast away those whom He did foreknow.

Still, this promise is in the Word of God—if not in the letter of it exactly, yet in the full meaning and spirit of it, which is more. For instance, we meet with this promise, probably, first of all, when Jacob fell asleep, after he had left his father’s house, a lone man, to go off to a land which he had never seen. You will remember, in the twenty-eighth chapter of *Genesis*, how it was recorded that Jacob lay down in a certain place which would seem to have been a lonely, rugged den, and as he lay and slept, he dreamed a dream, and beheld a wondrous ladder set upon the earth, the top of which reached to heaven, and behold the angels of God ascended and descended on it. Then it was that the Lord said to him, “I am with you and will keep you in all places where you go, and will bring you again into this land, for I will not leave you until I have done that which I have spoken to you of.” That is a blessed shape of the promise, is it not?—“I will not leave you until I have done that which I have spoken to you of.” That assurance meant—I will bless you, and I will bless your future seed. I will give you all the blessedness which you are able to receive at My hands, and I will not leave you till I have fulfilled with you the covenant of which you are the heir. So the Lord, in effect, says to each believer at this hour, “I will not leave you till I have done that which I have spoken to you of.” All the processes of grace shall be carried out in each humble, trustful soul. Our heavenly Father may be heard to say to each one of us by the Holy Spirit—“I have washed you from your sin in the precious blood of Christ; I will also deliver you from the stain, the power, and the indwelling of sin. I will perfect you; I will lead every thought captive to My love. I have already made you to be a partaker of My grace, and you shall surely be a partaker of My glory.”

Come, child of God, is not that a blessed promise as Jacob received it? “Alas!” you say, “I do not know how to get a similar hold upon the promise.” Ah, that is the point! But there is a Word of the Lord in that vision which I should greatly like you to notice. The Lord said to Jacob, “I am the Lord God of Abraham your father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon you lie, to you will I give it, and to your seed.” Brother, if you can lie down on a promise, the Lord has given it to you. There Jacob lies. He stretches himself out at full length, and with all his weight, in all his weariness, he lies down and goes to sleep, and by that act he takes possession of the land where he lies. What a sweet and sure mode of inheriting promises, namely, by resting on them! Behold the promise, and just say, “I believe this to be the sure and true word of the Lord. I will gladly lie down on it.” Let your faith be serenely confident, and then the promise rested on is yours. If you can lie down upon a promise it is yours. Oh, for faith, then, to stretch ourselves upon the blessed Word of our text at this moment! He has said, “I will never leave you, nor forsake you.” Let us each one say, O my God, I do believe this to be true, and I hereby venture my body, soul, and spirit upon this promise! For time and for eternity I trust my all with You.

Furthermore, our text occurs in the Book of *Deuteronomy*. We find Moses delivering this same Word, or one even more nearly like it than the Genesis edition, to the whole house of Israel, just before they were about to cross into the land of Canaan, to take possession of their inheritance. In the thirty-

first of Deuteronomy, at the sixth verse, Moses said to the people, “Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the Lord your God, He it is that does go with you; He will not fail you, nor forsake you.” When God’s people are beginning a long and fierce warfare, and when their enemies seem like giants in their sight, let them sharpen their swords upon this assurance, “He has said, I will not fail you, nor forsake you.” Go on, then, though you seem as grasshoppers in the sight of your foes, and in your own sight. Though there is very much land to be possessed, yet plunge into the war without fear, for “He has said, I will not fail you, nor forsake you.” We are able to overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil, since the Lord our God will be with us as our strength and our song, our sword and our shield.

In this same chapter of Deuteronomy you get the same text given to *Joshua*, who was the leader of the host, as also in the first chapter of the Book of Joshua, at the fifth verse, where the Lord expressly tells him, “I will not fail you, nor forsake you.” If you, my brother, are called to be a leader among God’s people, your heart, I know, will sometimes grow very heavy. In the midst of my own band of worthies I am often sore put to it, and you will be the same. You may meet defeats where you hoped for victories, and faint hearts where you looked for heroes, but the Lord, who calls you to play the part of a Joshua among His people, will be Jesus to you, if you are Joshua for Him, He will stand at your side as the Captain of the Lord’s host, and you shall surely win the victory.

This is the same Word which was afterwards spoken to David in his grey old age, when he was about to resign the scepter to his son Solomon. Solomon had to build a great and exceedingly magnificent house for the Lord, and it was no small enterprise for so young a man, and therefore David, in the first Book of the *Chronicles*, at the twenty-eighth chapter, and the twentieth verse, says to him, “Be strong and of good courage, and do it: fear not, nor be dismayed: for the Lord, even my God, will be with you; He will not fail you, nor forsake you, until you have finished all the work for the service of the house of the Lord.” Beloved, God was with Solomon in his colossal enterprise. He did build the temple. Whatever treasure was needed came in due time. Whatever art and skill were required—and the temple needed skill of a very unusual order for that early age of the world—yet everything was forthcoming. Tyre and Sidon yielded themselves as the servants of the God of the Hebrews for the building of the house. To the astonishment of the age, the great temple was built, and became the glory of all lands, for the Lord did not fail His servant.

You see, then, we have found four cases in which this promise was fulfilled. It held good after it had been already carried out. Do you, my Brother, leave your father’s house as a young man? Are you about to enter upon a very perilous course of life that will be set thick with trials, like the life of Jacob with Laban? “Fear not, for God will not fail you, nor forsake you.” On the other hand, are you as a child of God fighting with inward sin, because the Canaanite is still in the land? Is the inward spiritual battle very severe just now? Yet, “He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you.” Or, are you responsible for others? Are you called to watch for souls, and to lead others to the conflict? Be not cast down nor disquieted, as you will be very apt to be if you look to yourself, for this is an office involving sore travail. Find your strength in this word—“He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you.” Is it that God has put into your hands some great work to do for His name? Is your whole life to be as a temple, adorned with the riches of faith, and the glories of hope and love? Fear not, you shall finish your design. You shall make a temple for God to dwell in. Go boldly on in the matter to which God has called you. Go to the quarries, or to the gold mines, and do as God bids you, for “He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you.”

So you see the promise is in many ways fulfilled. I have seen a check for a million pounds. I have seen only one in my life. I handled it. It is on the wall of a friend’s house now, framed and glazed, but it is worth nothing as money. I suppose the million pounds were paid, the check is so marked. It is of no use to anyone. If a thief were to get in and steal it, it would be of no use to him. But God’s promises are always useful; you may receive them, and still receive them, over and over again. They stand forever true, and they are true this night to you and to me. If the world shall last ten thousand years, as I hope it may not, yet the promise will remain as a nail fastened in a sure place—“I will never leave you, nor forsake you.”

Thus have we had two observations; and I will now make a third with great brevity.

III. The WORD OF THE LORD IS TO BE APPROPRIATED BY EACH CHILD OF GOD, AND ACTED ON. “He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you.”

I like this singularity of the person. You see Paul had been saying in general, “Let *your* conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as *you* have.” And then he changes from the plural and writes, “for He has said, I will never leave *you*, nor forsake *you*.” When the Lord speaks in this instance, His promise is in the singular. He says not “your” plural and “you” plural; but “you” singular. He speaks to us with that—I do not know what to call it unless I use a French word—sweet *tu-toiage*, which is the language of endearment, the chosen speech of love. When one man speaks to another, and means him to know that his promise is assuredly and altogether for him, and that he is most lovingly his friend, he cannot do better than use the singular and personal pronoun. “I will never leave *you*, nor forsake *you*.”

Take the “you” plural out of all God’s promises, and put the “you” singular into its place, for you are permitted to do so. We make fearful failures with God’s promises through not appropriating them. I have heard of a Sunday school teacher who performed an experiment which I do not think I shall ever try with Sunday school children, for it might turn out exactly as it did in his case. He had been trying to illustrate what faith was, and as he could not get it into the minds of his children, he took his watch, and he said, “Now, I will give you this watch, John. Will you have it?” John fell thinking what the teacher could mean, and did not seize the treasure. He said to the next, “Henry, there is the watch. Will you have it?” The boy replied, “No, thank you, sir,” with a very proper modesty. He went by several boys, till, at last a youngster who was not as wise or thoughtful as the others, but rather more believing, said, “Thank you, sir,” and put the watch into his pocket. Then the other boys woke up to a startling fact; their companion had received a watch, and they had not. One of the boys inquired of the teacher, “Is he to keep it?” “Of course he is,” said the teacher, “I put the watch before you, and said that I gave it to you, but none of you accepted it.” “Oh,” said the boy, “if I had known you meant it, I would have taken it.” And all the boys were in a dreadful state of mind to think that they had lost the watch. Each one cried, “I did not think you meant it, *but I thought*,” each one said, “Please, teacher, I thought.” Each one had his theory except the simple little boy who believed what he was told, and got the watch! Now, I wish that I could always be such a simple child as literally to believe what the Lord says, and live by that belief. The apostle drives us to such practical faith when he says, “Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as you have: for He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you.”

You smiled just now. I do not think that there was any harm in your doing so, but I will tell you what we must not smile at, and that is, I believe that nine out of ten of you do not believe that God has said to you, “I will never leave you, nor forsake you.” You think you do, but you do not. You also have got some most powerful reason why you dare not take the watch—I mean the promise. You are so wise that you feel that you cannot expect the Lord to interfere in any way for you. No, no, no; either you are not worthy of it (which is quite correct), or else you do not like to take things quite so literally, or there is some other reason why you cannot literally accept the divine assurance. There are perhaps, one or two fools among us who have got a hold of God’s Word, and actually believe it to be a matter of fact, but I do not think that many are so simple. Those who do so are generally poor obscure persons, but I should greatly envy them if I were not one of their number. With all my heart I do believe that “He will never leave me, nor forsake me.”

When the service is over, I know who will go away with dancing feet, and sparkling eyes, to sleep sweetly through the night, and wake tomorrow morning fresh as the lark with a song on his tongue. It is that poor simpleton of a Christian who really believes his God, and says, “Yes, He will never leave me, nor forsake me.” Though he has scarcely a shoe to his foot, though he has scarcely a copper in his pocket, and though he is brought very low, and has to live from hand to mouth, yet if he has grasped the promise, he has such a wellspring of delight within him that his soul shall be satisfied in time of drought, and in the days of famine he shall be filled to the full. Oh, to be full of that blessed folly which treats God as He ought to be treated, and believes what He says, and acts thereon, and finds it to be true! If

you have a sham god, and a sham faith, and sham troubles, and sham experiences, why, you are yourself a sham altogether, but he that believes in a real God, and has such a real faith in God as a child has in its mother, shall find God's promises to be the verity of verities.

IV. A further observation is this; EACH WORD OF GOD HAS ITS OWN USEFULNESS. This particular Word that we have before us is an illustration of this fact.

This particular text is an extraordinarily useful one, for, first, if you notice, *it covers all time*. "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." Well, if God will *never* leave me, He will not leave me now. If He will *never* leave me, no time is excluded from the word "never." However dark or however bright, it says "never." Suppose I am going to live till I am ninety or a hundred—what then? You will call me a poor old soul, but *He* has said, "I will never leave you." Suppose I should be very sick indeed, and my reason should begin to fail? Even then "He has said, I will never leave you." Might there not occur a few minutes in which the Lord may forget me? Certainly not, "for He has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you." Is not this a blessed cover for the whole of life, and all the exigencies of it? It matters not how long we live, we cannot outlive—"I will never leave you." You that are familiar with the Greek text know that there are five negatives here. We cannot manage five negatives in English, but the Greeks find them not too large a handful. Here the negatives have a fivefold force. It is as though it said, "I will not, not leave you; I will never, no never, forsake you." Perhaps a verse of one of our hymns hits it off as nearly as can be—

*"The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose,
I will not, I will not desert to his foes;
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,
I'll never, no never, no never forsake."*

Our text *covers all space*, as well as all time. Suppose we emigrate. Suppose we are compelled to go to a backwoods settlement of America or Canada, or away to Australia or New Zealand, this promise will go with us all the way—"I will never leave you, nor forsake you." Suppose we have to take to sea, and lead the risky life of a sailor; we will sail with this at the masthead—"I will never leave you." But suppose we should get into prison. Does not Jesus visit those who are prisoners for His name's sake? Has He not said, "I will never leave you?" Suppose we go up in the world, and fall under great responsibilities, this goes up with us, "I will never leave you." Suppose, more likely, we go down in the world, this goes down with us, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you."

And then *it covers all circumstances*. "I will never leave you." I may get to be a very childish old body. "I will never leave you." But my dear children may all be dead, and I may be quite a solitary person. "I will never leave you." But every friend may turn tail, and desert me. "I will never leave you." But I may be in such a state that nobody will own me. "I will never leave you, nor forsake you."

I find the first Greek word has something of this meaning, "I will never sit loose by you," or "I will never relax." That is the root of the word. I will never let you slip. I will never let you go, as it were, from Me though holding you loosely.

The other word has in it something of the idea of a person remaining in a spot and another person going away from him, and so forsaking him. The Lord seems to say, "I will never leave you where I cannot be with you. I will never let you stand alone. I will always be with you."

This is a blessed, blessed promise. You see it takes in *all contingencies*, however serious. It takes in *all anticipations*, however doleful. It takes in *all suppositions*, and it includes *all actualities*. "I will never leave you, nor forsake you." Oh, dear! We sometimes sit down, and imagine all manner of dreadful, sorrowful things. I will not repeat what things I have said to myself, for I do not want you to know how foolish I sometimes am. But I have heard persons bemoaning themselves like this, "Perhaps I may lose my job. I may not get another. I may starve." What then comes of, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you?" Another says, "I fear I shall live to be very old. I do not know how I shall be supported. I shall get into the workhouse, and have to be buried by the parish. I cannot bear to think of it." Friend, do you not after all believe the Word, "I will never leave you, nor forsake you"?

I will tell you this morsel of my own faults; sometimes I have said, "I suffer so much. I become so ill. I shall be so long away from the Tabernacle. The congregation will be greatly injured. Perhaps I shall never be able to preach again." I have struggled to this pulpit when I could hardly stand, and when the

service was over, and I have been weary, the wicked whisper has come, “Yes, I shall soon be useless. I shall have to stay in my bed, or be wheeled about in a chair, and be a burden instead of a help.” This has seemed a dreadful prospect, but “I will never leave you, nor forsake you,” has come in, and I have shaken off my fears, and have rejoiced in the Lord my God.

Suppose we were to lose our eyes, we should still see God, and God would see us. Suppose we were to lose our hearing, we should still hear our Father’s voice. Suppose we should gradually fail in every faculty, the Holy Spirit would still comfort us, and be with us. Many children of God have been very happy in the most deplorable circumstances. And suppose we should die. Ah, well! That is the best thing that can be, for then we shall go home, to be with our heavenly Father forever.

I cannot under the influence of this grand text find room for doubt or fear. I cannot stand here and be miserable tonight. I am not going to attempt such a thing, but I cannot be despondent with such a text as this, “I will never leave you, nor forsake you.” I defy the devil himself to mention circumstances under which I ought to be miserable if this text is true. Child of God, nothing ought to make you unhappy when you can realize this precious text.

Some of you cannot bask in this sunshiny promise. It is not yours. The words are “I will never *leave* you.” This implies that God must be with us, and if He is not with us, the promise is not ours. You cannot take home to yourself the promise, “I will never leave you,” if you have nothing to do with God. “I will not forsake you,” does not this also take something for granted? If the Lord has never been with you, if He has never forgiven you, if you have never sought His face, if you have never accepted His mercy in Christ Jesus, why, then the promise is not yours, and you have cause for trembling rather than for rejoicing! God is against you. He fits His arrow to the string. He prepares His bolts against you. Tremble, and submit yourself to Him. Oh, that you would do so at once, and trust in Jesus, and live!

If the Lord is with you, and if you are with Him, the promise stands forever, “I will never leave you.” If you have trusted in Him—if you are trusting in Him—He has said, “I will never forsake you.” Go away and rejoice, O child of God! You must have troubles. Where could we go to have no cares? Unless a man could leap over the edge of the universe, or fly from under this cloudy sky, how could he escape from care? If you were to dive to the bottom of the sea, this crooked serpent would bite you. If you could fly above the clouds, this eagle would pursue you. If you were to hide in the heart of the earth, the death damp would overpower you. But with all actual trouble, with all possible trouble, with all impossible trouble, if you bear this promise with you, “I will never leave you, nor forsake you,” you may sing hallelujahs both in life and in death, and with such music you may wing your way to the world of bliss.

Let us begin the music now by singing right heartily—

*“Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise Him all creatures here below;
Praise Him above, you heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.”*

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ISAIAH 54.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—246, 243, 733, AND THE DOXOLOGY,
WHICH CONCLUDED THE SERMON.**

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